



## REFLECTION PROCESS ON SISTERS OF CHARITY PUBLIC STAND ON CLIMATE CHANGE/ GLOBAL WARMING FOR STAFFS AND BOARDS

Leader: The Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth periodically take a “public stand” – “In issues of major importance and concern, where the voice of the Congregation can effectively witness to Gospel values, the Congregation may be impelled to take a public stand. We are especially powerful when we speak, act, or advocate corporately as the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth,” (*Congregation Policy on Public Stands*). The Sisters of Charity in June 2015 voted unanimously to take a public stand on Climate Change/Global Warming. As our valued collaborators in mission with the Sisters of Charity we invite you to join us in reflection and action on this public stand, especially as it is lived out in this ministry. We join our concern and our efforts with those of Pope Francis in his prophetic encyclical letter *Praise be to You: On Care of Our Common Home*. Let’s listen to his words:

Reader: The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all... Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day. Its worst impact will probably be felt by developing countries in coming decades. Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming, and their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and ecosystemic services such as agriculture, fishing and forestry. They have no other financial activities or resources which can enable them to adapt to climate change or to face natural disasters, and their access to social services and protection is very limited. For example, changes in climate, to which animals and plants cannot adapt, lead them to migrate; this in turn affects the livelihood of the poor, who are then forced to leave their homes, with great uncertainty for their future and that of their children. There has been a tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from the growing poverty caused by environmental degradation. They are not recognized by international conventions as refugees; they bear the loss of the lives they have left behind, without enjoying any legal protection whatsoever. Sadly, there is widespread indifference to such suffering, which is even now taking place throughout our world. Our lack of response to these tragedies involving our brothers and sisters points to the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded.

Leader: After a year long period of prayer, study and reflection, the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth voted to affirm this public stand:

**We, the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth, recognizing the reality of global climate change and its negative impact on the entire community of Life, commit ourselves**

- **to a deeper contemplation of the presence of God in the wonderful diversity of creation which compels us to a life of reverence for the sacredness of Earth;**
- **to education about the reality of global warming in all our ministries;**
- **to a special focus on the effects of global warming on those made poor, especially women and children;**
- **to continual and sustained effort to reduce our carbon footprint in our local communities, sponsored and other ministries;**
- **to join with other people of good will in advocating for policy changes that will reduce carbon emissions and promote the use of sustainable forms of energy.**

**We make this public stand as a Congregation inspired by our patrons and founders: Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Marillac who challenged social and economic structures from the perspective of those made poor; Saint Elizabeth Seton who took contemplative delight in God's presence in creation; Mother Xavier, who met the needs of her age with energy and zeal.**

#### **REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**

*The leader invites the participants to discuss the following questions. If the group is very large, it may be divided into smaller groups with a period of reporting following the small group discussion.*

1. What are your initial reactions to the text of the Public Stand? Are there any words or images that you find particularly inspiring? Are there any that raise questions for you?
2. What are some of the ways in which we can respond to this Public Stand in our ministry here?
3. What are some next steps that we might take? How might you be involved in taking those steps?

Leader: We close our gathering by praying together a prayer with which Pope Francis concludes his encyclical letter:

All: All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one. O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth. Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light. We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.